

and lack of any noticeable white patches in the plumage, I concluded that the bird was an eider. I then referred to *Birds of North America* (Robbins *et al.*, 1966) to find out the field marks for differentiating the species of eiders, and continued to observe the bird in order to get a good look at the bill. When the bird faced me, I noted that the exposed portion of the upper mandible was very long, extending high onto the forehead, nearly to the eyes. From the side, this extension of the upper mandible made the feathered area beneath it appear unusually large. I observed the bird at a distance of about 100 yards through a Balscope Zoom 60, set at 20-30X. The sky was heavily overcast, but no rain was falling while I studied the bird. Stormy weather earlier in the day was undoubtedly responsible for the large variety of migrating ducks, gulls, and terns present in the area that day. Others who later observed the bird were: Wilfred Howard (610 Coburn Street, Elmira, New York 14904) and Mary Welles (1225 Horseheads-Big Flats Road, Elmira, New York 14903).

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Red-tailed Hawk preys on Common Gallinule: On the afternoon of 9 May 1976, while banding three nestling Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) we found the foot of an adult Common Gallinule (*Gallinula chloropus*) in the nest. The nest, located approximately 65 feet above ground in the crown of a Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), overlooks Clay Swamp in Onondaga County. The adult birds were observed on numerous previous occasions hunting over the marsh or perched atop electric transmission poles in the marsh.

The Common Gallinule has previously been reported as prey of Red-tailed Hawks (see Bent, *Life Histories of North America Birds of Prey*, Vol. 1, 1937, page 157), but to the authors' knowledge, this is the first such report for New York State. The occurrence is probably not uncommon around marshes in central New York.

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Pine Siskin breeding on Staten Island: A pair of Pine Siskins (*Spinus pinus*) was observed feeding two young at a thistle feeder in the New Dorp section of Staten Island, Richmond County, beginning June 19, 1976. The birds were a remnant of the flock of twenty-five or more which had used the feeder during

the winter. A small number (two to four) remained at the feeder through the middle of May, after which time only one bird was observed coming to feed. This single bird appeared every day until the feeder ran out of seed on June 6. The feeder was refilled on June 12 and the bird reappeared within fifteen minutes, spending a good part of each day there during the following week. On June 19 a second adult came into the yard, accompanied by two fully fledged young in buffy juvenal plumage. This second bird fed both juvenals while the original bird remained at its post on the feeder. The two young and the adults stayed only a few minutes, but returned later that day for short visits, and were seen again on succeeding days. The birds were last seen on June 23.

From the continuing presence of at least one adult throughout the spring it is presumed that the siskins nested in the vicinity. Palmer (1968, in Bent, *Life Histories of N. A. Cardinals, etc.*, p. 431) states that the male feeds its mate at the nest during incubation and until the young attain flight, and this would explain why only one bird was seen feeding during late May and early June. If they did breed nearby, it would be the first such record for Staten Island and one of the few for southern New York State. Previous records are at Ossining, Westchester County, 1883, and Cornwall, Orange County, 1887 (Bull, 1974, *Birds of New York State*, p. 564).

For a fuller account of this event see our weekly column, Footnotes on Nature, in the *Staten Island Sunday Advance*, July 4, 1976.

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Soaring Great Blue Herons: A loose flock of about 50 Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) was observed for 20 minutes at 5 p.m. on 1 April 1976, as the birds circled above a ridge in the Catskill Mountains near Route 17 east of Hancock. Although the flock was very high, it was clearly noted through binoculars that many individuals were using thermals to gain altitude, as were seven Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*) soaring above a nearby crest. The herons alternated flapping and soaring with set wings; soaring periods lasted about 5 to 15 seconds. Small groups of herons repeatedly broke away from the large flock and flew off, but most then made a large circle and rejoined the flock. Several other small groups of herons appeared in the distance and joined the flock, bringing the total to 74 birds. The entire flock flew off to the west at one point but most circled back a few minutes later and continued to flap and soar high above the ridge. No herons were seen soaring above any of the other nearby mountains. When last seen, the herons were so high that they were barely visible without binoculars.

On my next visit to the area on 7 April, a flock of 80 Great Blue Herons was seen in the same location. They lifted simultaneously out of the trees, flew in a